

Reclaiming Islam

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- What is a Progressive Muslim?
- “A progressive Muslim is one who relentlessly strives towards a universal notion of justice in which no single community’s prosperity, righteousness and dignity comes at the expense of another.”

Progressive Muslims, Omid Safi

Essential Concerns of Progressive Muslims

- An ongoing attempt at an Islamic *ijtihad*,
- ie: committed thinking based on disciplined but independent reasoning, to find solutions to new problems
- Not an Islamic reformation, rather it is a revival or renaissance
- The term ‘progressive’ versus ‘contextualist’
- Not canonical; diverse interpretations accepted

Gender Equity

- Many in the West perceive Muslim women as an undifferentiated mass; victims of a misogynistic religion
- Some say liberation only achieved through the abandonment of Islamic practices and imitation of western culture
- Muslim feminists are committed to work to improve the condition of Muslim women through the teachings of Islam not in spite of them
- Tackling patriarchal interpretation utmost priority
- In Turkey, *Diyanet* have appointed 400 female scholars or ‘*vaizes*’, to monitor the work done by Imams in mosques
- In Morocco over 50 Muslim female scholars have graduated from the most esteemed Islamic institution
- 2003 Moroccan Government passed reforms to the nation’s shariah- based family law

Amina Wudud U.S.A

- Muslim feminist and Quran scholar
- Influence has spread to SE Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia
- Led a mixed congregation of prayer in 2005
- “*By going back to primary sources and interpreting them afresh, female scholars are endeavouring to remove the fetters imposed by centuries o patriarchal interpretation.*”

Sisters in Islam, Malaysia

- Group of female lawyers, activists, journalists and academics, established 1987.
- Seek to articulate women's rights in Islam
- emphasise the need to interpret the Quran & Hadith in their proper historical, cultural contexts
- Lobbying has led to changes to Islamic family law
- Focus now diversified to other areas; social justice
- Men's Coalition Against Polygamy recently formed

Progress in Jordan; Queen Rania

- Lobbying to introduce harsher penalties for men who commit honour killings
- Embarked on a widespread campaign to educate Jordanians that honour killings is a barbaric cultural practice that violates Islamic principles
- Some Muslims do not discern between culture and religion

Khaled Abou ElFadl, U.S.A

- Islamic jurist and scholar; among world's most influential Islamic thinkers
- Highly critical of Wahabism and the Saudi regime
- Has been a leading voice in challenging patriarchal interpretations
- Calls for Muslims to be introspective and self critical
- Muslims must combat their 'siege mentality'
- Emphasises the need for Muslims to be concerned about social justice for all humanity
- *"O you who believe! Stand up firmly for justice, as witnesses to God; even against yourselves or your parents, or your kin and whether it be against rich or poor."*
(Quran 4:135)
- *"O people we have created you from one male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may get to know one another."*
(Quran 49:13)

Tariq Ramadan

- Oxford Professor and Swiss academic
- Emphasises the need for Muslims living in the West to contribute to the wider community
- Rejects the divisive rhetoric that some Muslims advocate against the West
- Urges Muslims to reinterpret Islamic texts
- Persona non grata in Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Libya

Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson

- One of the world's most influential Muslim converts
- Signatory of '*A common word between us and you*' open letter by 38 Muslim scholars to the Pope and Christian leaders
- Active advocate of interfaith and intercultural understanding; lectures against anti-semitism

Fethullah Gulen

- Turkish scholar & sufi philosopher
- Focus on interfaith dialogue and mutual respect
- Worldwide movement since 1970's
- Europe, Central Asia, USA
- *Gulen chair* at Aust Catholic University

Muslims against terrorism

- American Islamic Congress
- Free Muslims coalition
- formed after 9-11
- high profile and unequivocal denouncement of terrorism
- call upon Muslim community to report instances of extremism or support for terrorism

Australian Muslim Identity

- Leadership
- Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)
- Generational change in societies
- Transparency & accountability
- Female representation
- Focus on issues affecting all Australians, not just Muslims

Interfaith Dialogue

- Numerous initiatives ...
- JCMA conference
- JCMA schools project
- Building Bridges programme
- Mosque open days
- Interfaith Cooperation

- Interfaith anti-war demonstration, Melbourne

Art and Creativity

- Creative Muslims
- Souq collective
- Azaan.com
- *You am I* art exhibition
- Crooked Rib

Entertainment

- Stand-up comedians
- Rap Music (eg The Brothahood)

Salam Cafe TV

- Comedy, panel show
- SBS national TV, 2008
- Counteracted prevalent stereotypes with humour

Randa Abdel-Fattah

- author of teen novels
- written extensively for many Australian newspapers on Islamic issues

Waleed Aly

- ABC radio 774, Q&A
- Author of *'People like us'*
- asserts "... *there is no clash of civilisations; there is a clash of ignorance*"
- Advocate for women's rights and rights of indigenous Australians

National Centre for Excellence in Islamic Studies (NCEIS)

- Established by Govt *Muslim Reference Group*, 2007
- At Melbourne Uni, Griffiths Uni (Qld) & UWS (NSW)

A bright future ...

- Progressive opinions are not simply a 'voice in the wilderness'
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